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# „Bomben stärken die Moral"

**Amerikas Bombenoffensive in Vietnam dient eher politischen und psychologischen als militärischen Zwecken. Denn Präsident Nixon weiß aus einer geheimen Expertise, daß die unmittelbare Wirkung seiner Bomber gering ist. Die 1969 erarbeitete 548-Seiten-Untersuchung (NSSM 1 = National Security Study Memorandum 1), die das US-Nachrichtenmagazin „Newsweek" jetzt veröffentlichte, zeigt außerdem, daß Außenministerium, CIA und Pentagon den Erfolg des Bombens unterschiedlich beurteilten.**

*FRAGE: Gibt es Beweise, in welchem Umfang die Luftangriffe mit B-52-Bombern dem Vietcong und der nordvietnamesischen Armee Verluste zugefügt haben? Inwiefern wurden Einsätze des Vietcong und der nordvietnamesischen Armee gestört? Welchen Aussagewert haben Schätzungen des Gesamterfolgs?*

AUSSENMINISTERIUM: Obwohl aus Erklärungen von Kriegsgefangenen und Überläufern und aus erbeuteten Dokumenten hervorgeht, bestimmte Einsätze hätten zu erheblichen Verlusten geführt, reicht das vorliegende Beweismaterial für eine zuverlässige Schätzung des gesamten Umfangs dieser Verluste nicht aus. Es besteht wenig Grund zu der Annahme, diese Einsätze hätten den Vietcong und die nordvietnamesische Armee so sehr geschwächt, daß taktische Operationen in erheblichem Maße unterbunden oder die Kommunisten gezwungen wurden, ihre grundlegende Strategie in Südvietnam zu ändern ...

CIA: Aus den wenigen vorhandenen Untersuchungen und dem verfügbaren Nachrichtenrohmaterial ist erkennbar, daß Angriffe mit der B-52 erhebliche Verluste verursacht, daß sie erfolgreich Operationen des Vietcong und der nordvietnamesischen Armee unterbunden und einen starken, ungünstigen psychologischen Einfluß auf die feindlichen Truppen ausgeübt haben. In kürzlich angestellten Untersuchungen der Vereinigten Stabschefs wird eine Todesquote von 74 Mann pro Angriff oder eine indirekte Quote von 1300 pro Monat angegeben ...

PENTAGON: Gewiß sind manche Angriffe sehr wirkungsvoll. Manche verfehlen eindeutig das Ziel. Die meisten haben eine unbestimmte Wirkung ...: Die Schätzungen des Verteidigungsministeriums der Verluste des Feindes bei Angriffen durch die B-52 liegen weit unter denen der Vereinigten Stabschefs.

*FRAGE: In welchem Umfang führen die Abriegelungs-Bombenangriffe in Laos a) zu einer Verringerung der logistischen Leistungsfähigkeit des Feindes? b) zur Zerstörung des Materials auf den Versorgungswegen?*

AUSSENMINISTERIUM: Während augenblicklich die nachdrücklichen Bombardierungen an engen Stellen weiterhin den Feind am Transport von Versorgungsgütern hindern, ist im Korridor von Laos im Januar dieses Jahres (1969) ein ebenso starker Lastwagenverkehr wie im Januar vergangenen Jahres (als weniger intensiv bombardiert wurde) zu verzeichnen. Das deutet darauf hin ... daß die Alliierten dem Materialtransport der Kommunisten nur geringfügigen Schaden zufügen.

CIA: Aus den Erfahrungen anhand vierjähriger Beobachtungen der Bombenauswirkungen geht deutlich hervor, daß die Brauchbarkeit der laotischen Zufahrtswege durch Bombenangriffe nicht soweit vermindert werden kann, daß der Feind ernsthaft daran gehindert wird, seine Streitkräfte in Südvietnam mit Nachschub zu versorgen.

PENTAGON: Trotz der Beweise, daß die Versorgungszufuhr des Feindes durch Luftangriffe weitgehend reduziert wurde ... geht aus Geheimdienstberichten hervor, daß der Feind ... genügend Material transportieren konnte, um den Hauptbedarf zu decken.

*FRAGE: Welche Beweise gibt es für das Maß der Belastungen, denen Nordvietnam durch die Bombenangriffe ausgesetzt war?*

Chicago Sun Times

**„Das wollte ich nicht im Wahljahr"**

AUSSENMINISTERIUM: Theoretisch gab es eine obere Grenze für die Leistungsfähigkeit Nordvietnams, gleichzeitig die Verteidigung des Nordens und den Krieg im Süden fortzusetzen. Durch die Bombenangriffe ist Hanoi dieser Grenze zweifellos nähergekommen, aber es war nicht möglich, genau festzustellen, 1) wo die Grenze lag und 2) wieweit Hanoi zu einer bestimmten Zeit davon entfernt war ... Im Laufe der Bombenangriffe wurde klar, daß Nordvietnam nicht gelähmt wurde ... Dennoch hat es in der Retrospektive den Anschein, daß ... Friedensverhandlungen für Hanoi lebensnotwendig waren, zumindest wegen einer „Ruhepause", wenn nicht sogar für eine ständige Friedensregelung.

CIA: Umfangreiche Beschädigungen des Transportnetzes, eine weitgehend zerrüttete Wirtschaft, ein stark gestiegener Bedarf an Arbeitskräften und das Problem, die Moral des Volkes aufrechtzuerhalten ... waren die Hauptauswirkungen der Bombenangriffe in Nordvietnam. Hanoi war in der Lage, all diese Belastungen erfolgreich zu überwinden, so daß der Luftkrieg den Nachschub an Soldaten und Versorgungsgütern für die kommunistischen Streitkräfte in Laos und Südvietnam nicht ernsthaft beeinträchtigte ...

PENTAGON: Die Bombenangriffe hatten zweifellos nachteilige Folgen für das Volk in Nordvietnam ... Lebensmittel wurden rationiert, und Konsumgüter waren knapp; der Fliegeralarm unterbrach den Tagesablauf der Bevölkerung und zwang viele, ihre Häuser zu verlassen. Darüber hinaus wird geschätzt, daß ungefähr 52 000 Zivilisten bei amerikanischen Luftangriffen in Nordvietnam getötet wurden. Dennoch gibt es keinen Grund zu der Annahme, daß diese schwierigen Verhältnisse Nordvietnams Kampfbereitschaft auf ein kritisches Niveau reduziert hätten ... Im Gegenteil, die Bombenangriffe haben vielleicht sogar die Haltung des Volkes gefestigt und es enger an das Programm der Regierung gebunden.

DISSENT
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# How We Sank into Vietnam

Joseph Buttinger



One of the most puzzling questions future historians will have to deal with is why the United States ever got involved in the contemporary struggle for Indochina that has been going on since 1945. Did the considerations that determined the course of American foreign policy after World War II make this involvement inevitable or could it have been avoided in spite of the tensions that arose after 1945 between the West and the so-called Communist bloc? On this point, opinions will probably always remain divided, but those who believe that no other course could have been chosen without damage to the West or the United States would do well to consider the following:

(1) no Indochina war would have taken place if France had not insisted on reestablishing its control over Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos after these countries had gained independence following the Japanese surrender in 1945;

(2) it is questionable that the United States would ever have reached the point of even considering intervention in Vietnamese affairs if it had refused from the beginning to support the reestablishment of French rule in Indochina.

It is indeed one of the important conclusions of the Pentagon Papers "that the Truman Administration's decision to give military aid to France in her colonial war against the Communist-led Vietminh 'directly involved' the United States in Vietnam and 'set' the course of American policy." [1]

Yet this decision was made only in 1950, after the victory of Communism in China and the recognition of Ho Chi Minh's regime by the Soviet Union and Communist China. It would never have come about had it not been preceded by the decision made by the victorious Allies at the Potsdam Conference of July 17 to August 2, 1945, which gave the French not only a free hand but also Allied support for the reconquest of Indochina. This Potsdam decision, supported only by the British under both Churchill and Attlee, might not have been taken if President Roosevelt had still been alive. It was opposed by Nationalist China under Chiang Kai-shek and certainly not favored by Stalin. Vigorous American opposition to it would probably have led to the acceptance of Roosevelt's concept of a United Nations Trusteeship for French Indochina as a first step toward full independence.

Surprisingly on this crucial point the conclusion of the Pentagon Papers is that Roosevelt "never made up his mind whether to support the French desire to reclaim their Indochinese colonies from the Japanese at the end of the war." [2] In view of the forceful statements Roosevelt made against the return of the French to Indochina to his Secretary of State Cordell Hull and to his son Elliot, as reported in their memoirs,[3] this conclusion must be regarded as erroneous.

There has been much speculation about the question whether American massive military intervention in Vietnam might not have been avoided if President Kennedy had been alive. It is unlikely that this question will ever be answered with any degree of certainty. But it is probable that Vietnam after 1945 would have experienced a period of peaceful evolution toward independence, under a regime not unlike that of Tito's Yugoslavia, if Roosevelt had lived and succeeded in imposing his anticolonial solution for Indochina. Nor is it far-fetched to assume that Roosevelt would not have disregarded the appeals of Ho Chi Minh, in at least eight letters to Washington in 1945–46 for United States and United Nations intervention against French colonialism.[4] "There is no record . . . that any of these appeals were answered." [5] Not until publication of the Pentagon Papers did the American public hear of the existence of these letters.

Yet the Truman administration's policy toward Vietnam remained ambivalent for at least the first three years of the Indochina war. On the one hand, the U.S. "fully recognized France's sovereign position," as Secretary of State George Marshall said in a still secret State Department cablegram sent to the U.S. Embassy in Paris; on the other hand,

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[redacted]

STATINTL

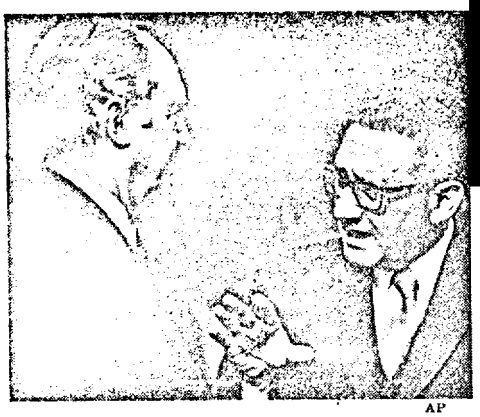
# NIXON'S SECRET BOMBING SURVEY

Even some of Richard Nixon's closest aides were puzzled by his sudden resumption of massive bombing of North Vietnam. For the dubious effectiveness of bombing as a strategic policy in Indochina was indicated to Mr. Nixon in the early days of his Presidency. Immediately after his Inauguration, the President instructed his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, to undertake a thorough review of U.S. military policy in Vietnam. The result was National Security Study Memorandum No. 1, a 548-page document that, like all such reports, is classified "Secret." This week, Sen. Mike Gravel of Alaska, who last year helped make the Pentagon papers public, plans to read NSSM 1 into the Congressional Record. Below, NEWSWEEK publishes for the first time excerpts from NSSM 1's appraisal of the effectiveness of U.S. bombing of North Vietnam during the Johnson Administration.

The study is a prime example of Kissinger's exhaustive attention to detail. Calling on the resources of the State Department, the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, he posed more than two dozen searching, even scholarly, questions about the conduct of the war. And, like the stern professor he once was, Kissinger often tossed back the answers for more rigorous thought. But despite the monumental investment of time and energy, the resulting paper seemed curiously ill-suited to the Administration's policy purposes. Indeed, as high White House officials have privately admitted, NSSM 1 revealed a disturbing number of differences in how the various agencies saw the U.S. role in Indochina.

On the question of bombing, the disagreements were clear. While admitting that the bombing had plainly not "paralyzed" Hanoi, the State Department under William Rogers emphasized the cumulative strain on North Vietnam of the long aerial bombardment. Melvin Laird's Pentagon analysts pointed out that, despite all the adverse effects on the North Vietnamese people—including an estimated 52,000 civilian casualties—the bombing only seemed to have rallied the people behind Hanoi. CIA Director Richard Helms and his staff took the most unequivocal stand of all, asserting that "the air war did not seriously affect the flow of men and supplies to Communist forces in Laos and South Vietnam. Nor did it significantly erode North Vietnam's military defense capability or Hanoi's determination to persist in the war."

On one point, however, opinion was unanimous: Soviet and Chinese aid had been crucial in helping Hanoi weather the bombing. [illegible]



AP

Kissinger, Rogers (left): Probing

1 may have had a significant impact on Mr. Nixon's thinking when, two weeks ago, he ordered resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam. Given the strong evidence that bombing had been of limited military value in Vietnam, the President presumably did not cherish the belief that he could defeat the North Vietnamese with his Air Force. Instead, his current aerial assault on North Vietnam seems designed primarily to serve diplomatic and psychological purposes.

NSSM 1, which reached Mr. Nixon's desk early in 1969, read, in part, as follows:

**What is the evidence on the scale of effect of B-52 attacks in producing Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army casualties? In disrupting VC/NVA operations? How valid are estimates of over-all effect?**

**STATE DEPARTMENT:** Although POW and [defector] statements and captured documents attest to significant casualties resulting from specific missions, the available evidence is insufficient for a confident estimate of the over-all scale of these casualties. There is little evidence to suggest that these [missions] have succeeded in inflicting a scale of losses on the VC/NVA sufficient to significantly disrupt tactical operations or to force the Communists to alter their basic strategy for South Vietnam . . . [However,] MACV operational reports have repeatedly noted that tactical air support air strikes in South Vietnam have disrupted Communist combat plans . . .

**CIA:** The few existing studies and the available raw intelligence make it clear that B-52 strikes do account for a substantial number of casualties, have effectively disrupted VC/NVA operations, and have a strong adverse psychological impact on enemy troops. Unfortunately, [it is] impossible to arrive at any quantitative measurement of the effect of B-52 strikes that can be regarded with confidence. Recent [studies by the Joint Chiefs of Staff] would indicate a kill ratio of .74 per sortie, or an implied [kill] rate of 1,300 per month during 1968. Thus . . . B-52 attacks in South Vietnam may [illegible]

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# Secret Memo Shows Bureaucracy In Conflict Over Viet War Policy

By Stanley Karnow
Washington Post Staff Writer

Assign several government agencies to survey Vietnam and, like the six blind men describing the elephant, they produce a report filled with conflicting observations. Give the report to the President, and he largely ignores it as he shapes his policies.

That is essentially the story of National Security Study Memorandum 1, a set of documents on Vietnam prepared by White House adviser Henry Kissinger's staff for Mr. Nixon soon after the President entered office in early 1969.

The memorandum, composed of contributions from eight U.S. agencies, indicates that military and civilian officials directly engaged in war operations were inclined to be optimistic about the current and future prospects in Vietnam while those primarily involved in analyzing the conflict from afar took a more pessimistic view.

Predictably, then, the hawkish "optimists" were the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Pacific command in Honolulu and the U.S. military and diplomatic missions in Saigon. The "pessimists," a more detached group, were the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Department's International Security Affairs office, and two State Department offices, Intelligence and Research and the East Asia bureau.

An ex-member of Kissinger's staff, who participated in compiling the documents, now explains that the divergencies among the contributing agencies were deliberately emphasized in order to dramatize to the President the extent to which perceptions of the Vietnam situation differed.

**Balance Bureaucracies**

"We wanted to show him how little anyone really knows about Vietnam," the former White House official said.

Judging from his subsequent actions, moreover, Mr. Nixon apparently disregarded many of the assessments and recommendations contained in the memorandum, and instead initiated strategies based on a variety of other considerations.

This suggests, as students of presidential behavior point out, that Mr. Nixon was and still is less concerned with Vietnam itself than with the effects of the war on domestic politics and international relationships. The President's decisions also stem from his efforts to balance rival Washington bureaucracies, all of which are striving to assert their own interests.

Evaluating the global importance of Vietnam, for example, contributors to the National Security Study Memorandum were sharply divided on whether there was any validity to various versions of the so-called "domino theory."

The hawkish military agencies contended that an "unfavorable settlement" in Vietnam would prompt "swift" Communist takeovers elsewhere in Asia. The Washington intelligence community calculated, in contrast, that a Communist victory in Vietnam might push Cambodia and Laos into Hanoi's orbit "at a fairly early stage" but "these developments would not necessarily unhinge the rest of Asia."

**Seeking Accommodations**

In April 1970, however, Mr. Nixon affirmed that "the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world" should the United States act like "a pitiful helpless giant" in Indochina. The President reietrated that thesis last Wednesday, saying that "the risks of war in other parts of the world would be enormously increased" if the Communists "win militarily in Vietnam."

But despite these warnings, many nations in Asia and elsewhere have been seeking accommodations with Communist China. Some have also edged closer to North Vietnam.

Thus new international alignments in Asia and in other parts of the world seem to be evolving mainly for reasons unrelated to the U.S. position in Vietnam.

The contributors to the memorandum generally appeared unable to reach either firm or unanimous conclusions on the effectiveness of B-52 strikes, called "harassment, interdiction and strategic missions" in official bureaucratic terminology.

The Joint Chiefs estimated that the B-52 raids inside South Vietnam during 1968 killed 41,250 Communists, an average of 2.5 enemy per sortie, while the Defense Department's office of International Security Affairs put the total figure for the period at 9,000, or 0.43 enemy killed per sortie. The CIA placed the average number of enemy killed by B-52s at 3.5 per sortie, but added that its evaluation methods were open to question.

**Protection Against Raids**

With all this, however, the agencies tended to be doubtful about the decisiveness of the B-52 attacks in either halting or discouraging the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong.

The State Department reported, for instance, that "there is little evidence to suggest" that the B-52 missions "have succeeded in inflicting a scale of losses on the Vietcong and North Vietnamese sufficient to significantly disrupt tactical operations or to force the Communists to alter their basic strategy for South Vietnam."

The same State Department report added, moreover, that the effectiveness of the B-52 operations diminishes "as the enemy develops tactics to adjust to their destructive potential."

Among other things, the report said, the Communists had constructed shelters and early warning systems to protect themselves against "recurring patterns in B-52 strikes."

While asserting that the bombing above the 17th parallel had "adverse effects" on the North Vietnamese people by creating hardships, the Pentagon contribution to the memorandum nevertheless concluded that these difficulties had not reduced "to a critical level" Hanoi's "willingness or resolve to continue the conflict."

Indeed, said the Pentagon report, the bombing "may have hardened the attitude of the people" in North Vietnam. Conversely, the study pointed out, "there is some evidence . . . indicating that morale and support for the war in North Vietnam has declined significantly since the bombing halt" in November 1968.

**Ho Chi Minh Trail**

Further questioning the value of the air operations, the Pentagon study estimated that the U.S. bombings had destroyed about $770 million worth of enemy installations while North Vietnam received some $3 billion in military and economic aid principally from the Soviet Union and China. Therefore, the study said, North Vietnam is "better off today than it was in 1965."

Similarly, the Pentagaon contribution referred to U.S. bombings of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos as "impressive" in its destruction of enemy supplies, but added that this "is not really what counts." Said the study:

"The critical factor is the amount that reaches South Vietnam . . . and since we have no control over imports to North Vietnam or inputs to Laos, it appears that the enemy can push sufficient supplies through Laos to



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